



MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: LSC Office of Program Performance
RE: Guidance on Responding to the LSC Request for Proposals
DATE: April 2004

This memorandum provides general guidance for responding to the LSC Request for Proposals (RFP) for the provision of civil legal services. Applicants should plan to participate in the Applicant Informational Session. This telephonic session is designed to provide an understanding of the information needed to prepare the grant application. It is described in detail in Appendix H. Applicants may also contact LSC regarding the RFP or the competitive grants process. LSC is available by E-mail at competition@lsc.gov.

General Suggestions for All Applicants

Consider the ABA Standards, LSC Performance Criteria, the LSC Act and regulations, and other materials such as LSC program letters that are included or referenced in the RFP. Every application is evaluated against these sources of practice standards. Applicants' policies and practices should reflect these standards and requirements, and reflect the overall goal of providing high quality legal services to clients.

Consider the weight assigned to each section of the RFP narrative. Each section of the RFP is assigned a percentage weight, which is applied during the review process. The weighting reflects LSC's evaluation priorities and should be considered in program design and implementation, as well as the proposal narrative.

Be specific rather than general. Applicants should provide examples to support general propositions stated in the proposals. For example, in addition to saying that the applicant has (or is planning to have) good working relationships with many organizations, list the organizations and the nature of the present or future working relationship with each. Instead of just saying that client eligible persons were surveyed, state the number of persons surveyed, the number of survey respondents, how they were identified, and what information they were asked to supply.

Address all aspects of each RFP topic. Many of the RFP topics ask the applicant to address several elements. For example, the question on coordination within the delivery system references the applicant's activities with legal services providers and with other community organizations that provide services to the low-income community. The response should thoroughly address activities with both types of organizations.

Organize the narrative using the 'Proposal Narrative Outline' (Attachment - 1 to the RFP Narrative Instructions) and the topic headings from the RFP instructions.

Responses should correspond to each particular section and subsection of the RFP, and should be labeled accordingly. Do not assume that information given in one section will be considered in response to another section. If necessary, either repeat information that you consider relevant to two sections, or cross-reference your responses. For example, if the applicant has established a pro se clinic on domestic violence in conjunction with the local spouse abuse clinic, that information should be referred too in the section on "matters" and in the section on cooperative efforts to deliver services.

Make the connection between the applicant's priorities and the topic being addressed, where appropriate. Legal services provider activities should evolve from a priority setting process. Examples of practices influenced by program priorities include: goals and objectives, case acceptance policies, other legal services provided, office and staffing configurations, and private attorney involvement. Proposals should describe the relevant connections that exist.

Address the unique aspects of each grant when applying for more than one service area. For example, delivery of services for a basic field -- general service area may differ from delivery for a basic field -- Native American or basic field -- migrant service area in many respects because of the different needs and priorities of the different communities. There may be differences in: the priority setting processes, priorities, goals and objectives, delivery strategies, intake systems, legal work management, and in other aspects of the delivery systems. Applicants are required to provide a separate narrative supplement when applying for more than one service area type. [Click here](#) for narrative instruction for further details.

Ensure that information provided in the proposal is consistent and free of errors.

The care with which a proposal is crafted affects the way it is perceived. Check to make sure that your proposal is consistent throughout. Inconsistencies in the information and data presented raise questions for reviewers about the reliability of the information. Examples of inconsistencies from previous proposal submissions include: budgets that did not reflect the work described in the narrative and estimates of casework to be done that did not reflect the applicant's priorities. A well-drafted proposal should be presented clearly and be free of spelling, typographical, and major grammatical errors.

Participate in the Applicant Informational Session. All applicants are encouraged to participate in this telephonic conference conducted by LSC staff. The call provides an opportunity to submit specific questions and receive answers, as well as learn about answers to questions submitted by other applicants. This conference is particularly important for applicants that have not previously applied for LSC funding.

Review the Evaluation Guidelines provided at www.ain.lsc.gov under Competition and Grants/Bulletin Board. The evaluation guidelines provide insight on a range of information that LSC considers during the evaluation of grant proposals. Please note that the evaluation guidelines should not be construed as a means for preparing the grant proposal.

Suggestions for New Applicants

Provide specific information about how and when the proposed delivery approach will be implemented. Applicants that have not been recipients of LSC funding should provide as much detail as possible about how and within what time frame the proposal will be implemented. For example, if a priority setting process has not been conducted, the applicant should describe the proposed process and when it is expected to be completed. Similarly, the applicant should describe the process and time line for hiring staff, opening intake and becoming fully operational, implementing a private attorney involvement effort, etc.

Describe in detail the applicant's experience that demonstrates the ability to deliver high quality legal services. New applicants should provide as much detail as possible about their experiences that demonstrate the capacity of the applicant to provide quality legal services to low-income people, such as prior legal experience, law office management, significant accomplishments in representing clients, and how the experience and accomplishments are transferable to the provision of effective and efficient services to low-income clients.

Suggestions for Current or Former Recipients of LSC Funding

Explain proposed changes in practice, structure, facilities, resources or other aspects of the program's work. The applicant should describe the specific changes proposed, whether a decision has been made to implement the changes, and, if so, when the changes will be implemented or how they will be phased in.

Explain changes or differences in the program's current operations that have occurred since the submission of the previous application for funding. For example, if an office has been closed, the narrative should explain the reason for the change and how clients in the area formerly served by the office have access to the program. Similarly, an explanation should be provided if the last application proposed a significant change or action that was not implemented.

LSC has opened the grants competition service desk. Please contact the service desk at competition@lsc.gov, if you have any questions about preparing the grant application or the competitive grants process.